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21 June 1983

Talking Points for the DCI

CHAD

Chadian dissident advance units are now within 20 kilometers of Habre's principal northern stronghold at Faya Largeau and an attack could come at any time.

- The advance so far has been hampered by confusion and disorganization.
- One major rebel column, previously stalled about 150 kilometers from Faya Largeau, has been refueled.
- The advancing units are waiting for the Libyans to complete preparations to launch ground support air strikes from Aozou airfield using some 18 SU-22 Fitter aircraft and a smaller number of turbo prop SF-260 light strike aircraft.

Libyan airpower coupled with the dissidents superior equipment--including multiple rocket launchers, 120-mm mortars, and 105-mm howitzers--will make it difficult for Habre's forces to hold Faya Largeau.

- The dissidents' confusion is giving government forces some important breathing time but they are low on food, ammunition, and fuel.
- Some relief supplies and 300 additional government troops reportedly were airlifted yesterday to Faya Largeau from N'Djamena.

The fall of Faya Largeau would represent a major military and psychological blow for Habre's year-old regime.

- The 3,000 troops Habre has in the north are his best trained and equipped men.

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- The troops that survive and try to retreat toward N'Djamena will be vulnerable to Libyan air attacks in the wide open desert terrain.
- Faya Largeau, Habre's birthplace, offers a staging base for eventual ground and air attacks against N'Djamena.

The fall of Faya Largeau would not open N'Djamena to immediate rebel ground attack.

- The capital is 1,700 kilometers south of Faya Largeau, the rebels would require time to regroup and resupply, and miry roads caused by the rainy season (June to September) would slow the movement of wheeled vehicles and foot troops as they approached N'Djamena.
- The capital has no natural defenses, however, and Habre has few reliable troops left in N'Djamena.
- N'Djamena suffers acute food and fuel shortages because of Nigeria's continuing closure of its side of the border with Chad. President Shagari has promised to reopen the border soon, for humanitarian shipments destined for Chad, but his decision could take several days to implement.

Habre's defeat at Faya Largeau would probably:

- Lead to renewed factional bickering within Habre's coalition regime between northerners and southerners, possibly with some pressing for a last minute political accommodation with Libya.
- Spur remnants of dissident groups in Chad's south and east to renew guerrilla activities.
- Cause heightened anxiety for Chad's weak, French-speaking neighbors and Sudan as well as generate further African questioning of Western resolve to combat Libyan adventurism in the region.

The extent to which Libya is prepared to become directly involved in toppling habre is unclear.

- We believe that the installation of a Libyan-backed regime in N'Djamena ultimately would require the presence of a Libyan occupation force to prop it up because of inevitable ethnic and factional rivalries, but we have no evidence that Tripoli is preparing to send its regular ground forces into Chad at this time as it did in 1980.

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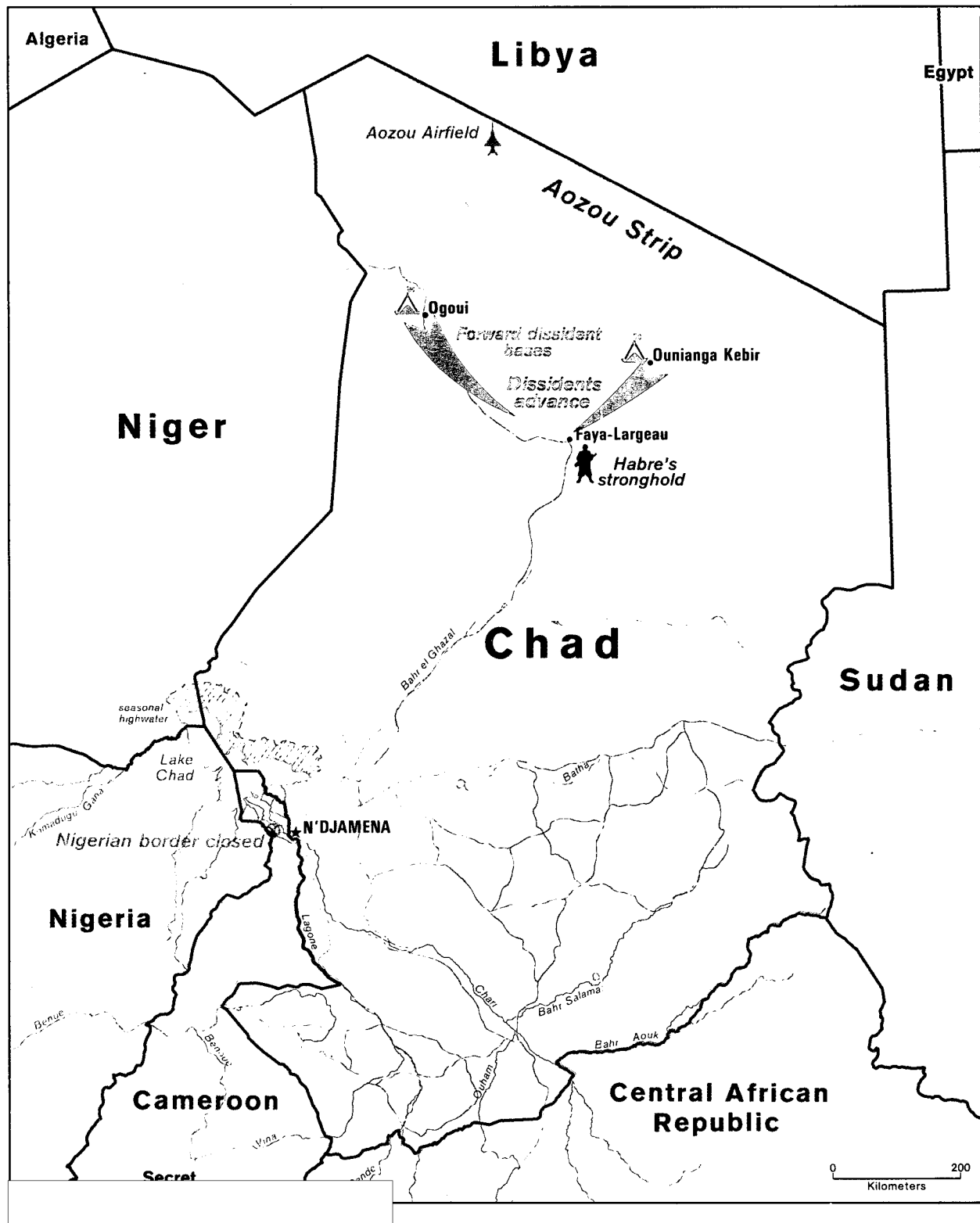
- Libya could use its air power to bomb N'Djamena, to support Chadian dissident attacks against the capital, or to land troops at outlying locations from the capital.
- Tripoli probably would step up efforts to infiltrate additional Chadian oppositionists and arms into western and southern Chad via the porous borders of Nigeria, Cameroon, and Central African Republic.

The French Government apparently remains divided regarding additional aid to Habre, and President Mitterrand's decision will be heavily influenced by appeals from key African francophone states such as Ivory Coast.

- In the short run, Paris probably will provide no more than token new arms aid to Habre in hopes of assuaging concerned French-speaking states.
- French forces in Africa, including 1,300 troops in neighboring Central African Republic, are lightly equipped and lack fire power to effectively counter an armored foe.
- Ultimately, Paris' attitude toward any new government in Chad will be determined by the extent of representation it affords the non-Muslim south, where the bulk of French economic, political, and cultural interest is centered.

Nigeria may press further attacks in the Lake Chad area if it concludes that Habre's downfall is inevitable.

- Lagos' aim would be to consolidate its control over Lake Chad out of concern that a Libyan-backed regime in N'Djamena would allow Tripoli to use Chadian territory for subversion against its moderate neighbors.
- We have no evidence of collusion as is alleged by the French and Chadians between Lagos and the Libyan-backed Chadian dissidents or Tripoli to bring down Habre. Nigeria's involvement in the Lake Chad fighting stems from domestic considerations, to allow the Nigerian military to redeem its sullied reputation and to enhance President Shagari's reelection prospects.



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